

Sleep Sheet

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A HEALTHY SLEEP STYLE

- ▼ **Morning:** Wake up at the same time each morning.

Have a cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate if you like it and it doesn't bother you. Eat a nutritious breakfast.

Begin work alert with lots of energy and in a good mood.

- ▼ **Afternoon:** Have a nutritious lunch.

Exercise by late afternoon.

Avoid alcohol, nicotine and caffeine.

- ▼ **Evening:** Have a nutritious dinner.

Stop working and begin to relax before bedtime.

Eat a healthy snack. Limit fluids.

Before bed, enjoy a relaxing activity.

Make sure your sleeping environment is comfortable, preferably cool, dark and quiet.

Go to bed at your regular time or later if you are not sleepy.

- ▼ **Night:** Get a good night of eight hours in bed with lots of deep sleep and without disruptions.

SLEEP TIPS

PROMOTING A HEALTHY SLEEP STYLE

- **Keep a regular sleep schedule.** Our sleep-wake cycles are regulated by a "circadian clock" in our brain and the body's need to balance sleep and wake times. It is beneficial to go to bed and get up at the same time each night to allow your body to get in sync with this natural pattern. Keeping a regular bed and wake-time, even on the weekends when there is the temptation to "sleep-in," will make it easier for you to fall asleep and maintain sleep quality throughout the week.
- **Avoid caffeine.** Caffeine is a stimulant, which means it can keep you awake. Caffeinated products, such as coffee, tea, cola and chocolate, remain in the body on average from 3 to 5 hours, but they can affect some people up to 12 hours later. Consuming caffeine in the afternoon or evening can disrupt sleep, so it is important to monitor your caffeine intake late in the afternoon. Even if you do not think that caffeine affects you, it may be disrupting your sleep. Avoiding caffeine within 6 hours of going to bed can help improve sleep quality.
- **Avoid nicotine.** Nicotine is also a stimulant. Smoking before bed makes it more difficult to fall asleep. When smokers go to sleep, they experience withdrawal from nicotine, which also causes problems falling asleep or waking in the morning. Nicotine can also cause nightmares. Difficulty sleeping is just one more reason to quit smoking.
- **Avoid alcohol.** Although many people think of alcohol as a sleep aid because of its sedating effect, it causes more sleep disruptions throughout the night. Consuming alcohol before bedtime usually helps people to relax and fall asleep, but can lead to a night of disturbed sleep.

- **Don't eat or drink too much close to bedtime.** Eating or drinking too much may make you less comfortable when settling down for bed. It is best to avoid a heavy meal too close to bedtime. Also, spicy foods may cause heartburn, which leads to difficulty falling asleep and discomfort during the night. Try to restrict fluids close to bedtime to prevent nighttime awakenings to go to the bathroom. On the other hand, going to bed hungry may also make it more difficult to sleep. A light snack is often best before bed and may help you sleep better.
- **Exercise at the right time promotes sleep.** In general, exercise makes it easier to fall asleep and contributes to sounder sleep. However, exercising right before going to bed will make falling and staying asleep more difficult. In addition to making us more alert, body temperature rises during exercise, and takes about six hours to begin to drop. A cooler body temperature signals the body that it is time to sleep. Exercise, but do so at least three hours before bedtime. Late afternoon exercise will help you fall asleep at night.
- **Use relaxing bedtime rituals.** A relaxing, routine activity right before bedtime will make it easier to fall asleep. Avoid stimulating activities like working and exercise that can make it more difficult to fall asleep. Try an activity that is relaxing such as taking a hot bath, reading or listening to music. If you are unable to avoid tension and stress, it may be helpful to learn relaxation techniques from a trained professional.
- **Create a sleep-promoting environment.** Most people sleep best in an environment that is cool, quiet and dark. Check your room for noise or other distractions, including a bed partner's sleep disruptions or an environment that is too bright, too dry or humid, or too hot or cold. Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive for you and your bedpartner.

IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY SLEEPING...

- **Associate your bed with sleep and sex only.** Use your bed only for sleep and sex to strengthen the psychological association between bed and sleep. Follow a regular wake-up schedule.
- **Avoid watching the clock.** If you associate a particular activity or item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine. For example, if looking at a bedroom clock makes you anxious about how much time you have before you must get up, move the clock out of sight. Do not engage in activities that cause anxiety and prevent you from sleeping.
- **Limit sleep time in bed.** If you have difficulty sleeping, go to bed only when you are tired. If you do not fall asleep within 15 minutes, it is best to get out of bed and do another relaxing activity until you feel sleepy again. Repeat if necessary. If worrying about something you need to do prevents you from sleeping, it is sometimes helpful to jot down notes in a "to do" book. Nap during the day only when needed and plan on napping just 20-30 minutes.
- **Use a sleep diary and talk to your doctor.** Try these tips and record your sleep and sleep-related activities in a sleep diary. If problems continue, discuss the sleep diary with your doctor. There may be an underlying cause for your sleep problem, and you will want to be properly diagnosed. Your doctor will help treat the problem or may refer you to a sleep specialist.

Visit our Web site at
www.sleepfoundation.org
to obtain a sleep diary
or call NSF: 202-347-3471.